



OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN

Michael R. Criss
First Selectman, Town of Harwinton
GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION & ELECTIONS
COMMITTEE

Good afternoon, my name is Michael R. Criss, I am the First Selectman for the Town of Harwinton and I am submitting testimony regarding S.B. 1057 "An Act Concerning the Secretary of the State and Early Voting", S.B. 1064 "An Act Concerning the Implementation of Early Voting", H.B. 5004 "An Act Implementing Early Voting".

S.B. 1057 "An Act Concerning the Secretary of the State and Early Voting".

S.B. 1064 "An Act Concerning the Implementation of Early Voting".

H.B. 5004 "An Act Implementing Early Voting".

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and submit testimony on proposed bills regarding S.B. 1057 "An Act Concerning the Secretary of the State and Early Voting", S.B. 1064 "An Act Concerning the Implementation of Early Voting", and H.B. 5004 "An Act Implementing Early Voting".

In the November 2022 general election, voters approved a constitutional amendment that allows the General Assembly to pass legislation establishing in-person, early voting. Currently, 46 states authorize early in-person voting.

The Town of Harwinton respectfully submits the following comments on the above-referenced proposals to implement early, in-person voting prior to election day.

The Town of Harwinton supports efforts to implement a statutory framework allowing voters to cast a ballot early, but is against added costs placing more financial strain on our small communities and property owners, prior to election day, including primaries. The Town of Harwinton has a hard enough time finding poll workers for election day let alone for 10,14,18 days or weekends. We have concerns with the number of days and hours that municipalities must make early in-person voting available, given the costs associated with staffing polling sites.

Although it is anticipated that small towns may designate town halls as the polling location, many town halls are closed on Fridays or Friday afternoons and on weekends and holidays. Requiring towns to make the polling location available on weekends, holidays, and evenings will result in additional costs, including staff and overtime.

TOWN OF HARWINTON

100 BENTLEY DRIVE

HARWINTON, CONNECTICUT 06791

Tele: (860) 485-9051 • Fax: (860) 485-0051



OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN

Under the various proposals under consideration, municipalities will be required to provide for 10, 14, or 18 days of in-person voting prior to election day. Given the population of many of our small towns, this will result in unnecessary costs and benefit a handful of voters. The Town of Harwinton would be more in favor of no excuse absentee ballots rather than having in-person voting due to our aging population and only benefitting a small percentage of voters. This is not a one size fits all approach, Towns know the needs and can evaluate and should have the choice to offer in-person or no excuse absentee ballots. The State should also cover all expenses associated with its efforts.

In addition, under each of the proposals, the polling location must be available from 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., including weekends, except on the last Wednesday and Thursday prior to the election or primary, the location must be open from 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Again, this will result in unnecessary costs, including staff and overtime. It may also prove difficult to ensure that people are available to staff polling locations because many municipalities are having difficulties hiring workers to fill vacancies.

Harwinton would support revisions to the bills to provide a choice of in-person or no excuse absentee voting. If in-person is mandated the State must fund these efforts and polling locations should only be open during regular business hours on days when town halls are open. In addition, municipalities may keep polling locations open for additional hours at their discretion.

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in opposition of S.B. 1057, S.B. 1064 and H.B. 5004 on behalf of the Town of Harwinton. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Michael R. Criss
First Selectman, Town of Harwinton
Vice Chair, Northwest Hills Council of Governments
Legislative Chair, Northwest Hills Council of Governments

TOWN OF HARWINTON

100 BENTLEY DRIVE
HARWINTON, CONNECTICUT 06791
Tele: (860) 485-9051 • Fax: (860) 485-0051

Web Site:
www.harwinton.us

Email:
1stselectman@harwinton.us